Age Old Question: How to Stop Hate

ELOUISE BELL

This week, Americans of all party affiliations, from all backgrounds and lifestyles, have been writing to Utah Sen. Orrin hatch, chair of the Senate Judiciary Committee, requesting his support of the Hate Crimes Prevention Act (House Resolution 3081/Senate Bill 1529). I hope our Orrin chooses this moment to do something at which he has become increasingly skilled: rising above partisan politics.

That said, I would like to move beyond a discussion of hate crimes legislation. In fact, let's leave the crimes per se. It's time to face up to the ultimate evil: the hate.

Just about any group can be the target of the hate and the resultant hate-driven crimes. The particulars vary with the country or region, and with the times. I had always known about "the troubles" in Ireland, and the Catholics. But when I visited Ireland last spring, I was shocked and astonished anew to learn what absolute atrocities had been committed over the centuries because of group hatred.

What kind of man locks the doors to a church filled with men, women, children, and then burns it to the ground simply because his victims are Catholics? A madman? Maybe. But this madman governed England successfully during a complex time. How could the genuinely devout scripture-loving Oliver Cromwell have been so consumed by hate?

Of course, we need not go back in time nor across any oceans to see examples of the force of hate. But where does it come from? Why do we human beings seem to need someone, anyone, to hate? The "who" changes, but the hate remains astonishingly constant.

Who among us has not felt, at one time or another, the shiver of unfounded hate cracked like a whip in our direction? You are rare if you have not felt it. It's something to think about:

Chances are excellent that somebody out there hates you, without ever knowing you.

If you are white, if you are male, if you are heterosexual, if you are slender and whole, you might have to go to a foreign land, or stroll the streets of an unfamiliar city, or walk into the wrong bar to directly experience that hate, but believe me, it is out there. If you are not white, not male, not fit, you don't have to go anywhere.

A documentary on the battle to conquer polio in the Forties and Fifties shown on PBS recently included testimony by polio victims about the "bashing" they received because they were crippled by the disease. Name-calling, taunts, mockery — kids weighed down with steel braces and constant pain had these assaults to endure, as well.

And the hate came not from a rare twisted mind, but was the rule rather than the exception. Why?

Some pundits say it is the ancient fear of the Other. Anyone who is too different, they say, pushes our primal alarm bell, which screams "Danger!" I have experienced this response. I have, on occasion, felt a kind of barely controlled panic when surrounded by those who were beyond my comfort zones.

(Phyllis Schlafly spoke to a conference of 10,000 fired-up far-right activists in the Astrodome in 1977. I was so unnerved I left after 45 minutes.) On the other hand, I know I have been part of groups that felt too "Other" for certain of my fellow Earthlings. But I have also seen how quickly most human beings adapt to their exotic fellow beings. I don't agree that the hate which kills comes from simple fear of the unknown Other.

Here's what I have come to believe: Life itself is scary, but one of the scariest parts is our own inner darkness. By "dark," I don't mean what some righteous righters mean when they say "evil." I just mean "dark" emotions and impulses, doubts and ambiguities that generally stray in the dark because our culture tells us they are "not nice."

We hide them, from ourselves. Sometimes we hide them so well that we ourselves no longer see them. We do not consciously know they are there. But they are. Now, if we know about them and think about them, ponder what we really choose to do about the shadowy parts of ourselves, we can usually live in peace with this shadow self, can actually be richer for it.

But when we lock the shadow so far away that we don't even know it is there, two things happen. One, the smothered self explodes out of hiding and creates chaos. "He was such a nice, quiet boy," the neighbors all swear after the quiet boy has sprayed machine gun bullets from the bell tower.

The other is that the conscious self smells the hidden truth. The conscious self knows someone nearby is corruptible, or full of anger at the system, or feeling sexual urges where society says no-no. The proximity, the dangerous closeness of this darkness, gnaws at the person.

To relieve the scariness, that person lights a fire under a pot of hatred that can spew in almost any direction, towards any group, except the inner self. But because the target is the wrong one, the pot grows hotter and hotter. And when it boils over, Matthew Shepard is left shattered on a lonely Wyoming fence.

Let's look at legislation, yes. Let's prosecute every crime to the hilt, certainly. But before, after, and during all of it, let's think hard, and talk to one another about the hatred in the human heart, and how we can turn down the fire. A bit of 20th century folk wisdom says, "What we feel, we can heal."

Please, God.

Elouise Bell is professor emeritus at Brigham Young University.

TOM BARBERI

RESPONSE

Elouise, I agree with you that hate is there. It always has been and always will be. Hate is a powerful emotion. There is good hate and horrible hate.

To hate injustice and rail against it is a good thing, but injustice done to others out of irrational hate has been going on forever. You site scripture-loving Oliver Cromwell and the unspeakable atrocities committed by this devout person. When you peel away the layers of reason given by such monsters you hear the name of God often mentioned.

CBS's "48 Hours" recently devoted an hour discussing hate in general and the KKK in particular. What was shown was so ugly it makes you sick. One telling part of the show was on an individual who was instrumental in starting the Aryan Nation group in Idaho. He now works hard to fight against such groups.

What caused him to make such a dramatic turn around was when one of his members said that he would have to euthanize his own son because he was born with a cleft pallet, imperfect in the mind of his fellow Aryans. His eyes were opened to how horrible the group he helped start was.

There was another show done on serial killer Joseph Paul Franklin, who is responsible for about 18 shootings and murders, including two joggers in Liberty Park here in Salt Lake in the '80s and the shooting of Vernon Jordon, President Clinton's best friend. History shows us how big a part religion has played in fueling the flames of hate and it continues to do so today. Just look at the Middle East.

We hear leaders say that we should love the sinner but hate the sin. This is nothing more than a thin veil used to promote ongoing hate of others. It does nothing to help eliminate the hate.

To see the face of the hate, we must look in the mirror and ask the people we see if they can accept others different than from themselves.

The latest statistics on teen pregnancy and sexual activity prove education is the key to changing attitudes and behavior. Teen pregnancy rates and sexual activity have decreased dramatically as a result of ongoing efforts to educate our youth to the problems.

This will take time, but the world will be better for the effort. When children are taught about hate and how destructive it is, there is even a chance that they can help their parents learn to be more forgiving and understanding of others. There is hope and it exists in the playgrounds of our children.

Ciao.

Tom Barberi is a talk show host on KALL-AM.

Mixed-Blood Utes Lose Say in Tribal Hunt Policy

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

FORT DUCHESNE — A series of opinions issued by the Bureau of Indian Affairs means mixed-blood Utes will no longer have a say in setting the tribe's hunting proclamation.

Until two years ago, the Ute Distribution Corp. — which represents 490 mixed-blood Utes taken off the tribe's rolls in 1954 — helped draft the policy.

But Fort Duchesne, Uintah County and Secretary of the Interior Bruce Babbitt have upheld earlier decisions lifting the tribe's obligation to work with the Ute Distribution Corp. on the hunting proclamation. Also, 27 percent of tribal game permits no longer have to be reserved for mixed bloods.

Babbitt concurred with a decision issued earlier by BIA Area Director Wayne C. Nordwall regarding UDC's claims for joint management of the tribe's hunting and fishing resources.

Uintah-Ouray BIA Superintendent Dave Allison determined in an opinion last year that "UDC had no joint management role to play in the disposition of elk and in the decision to sell commercial permits for big game."

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